



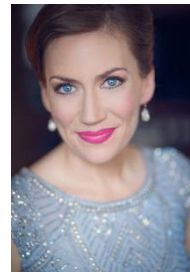
## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS HUMPERDINCK'S *HANSEL AND GRETEL* IN  
NEW CO-PRODUCTION WITH LONDON'S ROYAL OPERA  
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, NOVEMBER 15–DECEMBER 7**

**"Enchanting" Staging by Director and Production Designer Antony McDonald  
Features Mezzo-Soprano Sasha Cooke and Soprano Heidi Stober in the Title Roles and  
Christopher Franklin Conducting**

**Performances Coincide with Family-Friendly Activities, Earn Your Wings Community  
Engagement and 50% Discount on Children's Tickets**

**Tickets available at [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com) and (415) 864-3330**



*Hansel and Gretel* production by Antony McDonald (©Cory Weaver);  
mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke (©Vero Kherian); soprano Heidi Stober (©Simon Pauly)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 28, 2019) — San Francisco Opera presents Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, November 15–December 7. Last seen on the War Memorial Opera House stage nearly two decades ago, the popular fairy-tale opera returns in an "enchanting" (*The Times*, UK) new co-production with London's Royal Opera by director and production designer **Antony McDonald**. Humperdinck's sweeping score will be conducted by **Christopher Franklin** and sung in English translation by a cast including mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke** as Hansel, **Heidi Stober** as Gretel and **Robert Brubaker** as the Witch.

*Hansel and Gretel* is set to a libretto by Humperdinck's sister Adelheid Wette and follows the adventures of two hungry children who enter an enchanted forest looking for food, only to find themselves facing a sinister threat. Based on the fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm, Humperdinck's opera utilizes an orchestra of Wagnerian proportions (65

instrumentalists) and sophisticated harmonies that lend heroic grandeur to this story of childhood innocence.

McDonald is a Royal Designer for Industry, a title he was awarded in his native UK to celebrate his decades of experience designing and directing theater and opera. His work includes Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Nederlandse Reisopera), Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Bolshoi Opera) and *Tristan und Isolde* (Opéra National du Rhin).

About his production of *Hansel and Gretel*, McDonald said: "I have tried to approach it as a simple fairy story. It is set in Germany, but it is not realistic—it is magical! I have allowed the themes of the piece—hunger, abusive parents, greed and, finally, good triumphing over evil—to play themselves rather than be heavily underlined. I appreciate that this is an opera that very often is the first that many children see and therefore wanted it to be visually arresting and engaging, creating a balance of fear and delight."

Mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke has earned acclaim for a wide variety of roles with San Francisco Opera, including Mary in the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (2013), Anna in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* (2015), Magdalene in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2015) and, most recently, the title role of Handel's *Orlando* (2019). The *San Francisco Chronicle* said, "Anytime you add Cooke into the mix, there's a whole new level of magic involved." Her portrayal of Hansel is the first in a series of high-profile, Bay Area engagements this season including performances with the Violins of Hope, an artist-in-residence engagement with the San Francisco Symphony and a return to San Francisco Opera in summer 2020 to portray Laurene Powell Jobs in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*.

Earning praise last season for her appearances with San Francisco Opera as Angelica in Handel's *Orlando* and Zdenka in Strauss' *Arabella*, soprano Heidi Stober brings her "gorgeous coloratura technique and a plush sound" (*San Francisco Examiner*) to the role of Gretel. The American soprano, who was named one of *Opera News*' "18 to Watch" in 2018, has won acclaim in an array of roles in works by Handel, Mozart, Massenet, Verdi, Jerome Kern and Stephen Sondheim on the War Memorial Opera House stage since making her Company debut in 2010.

Mezzo-soprano **Michaela Martens** will add Gertrude, Hansel and Gretel's mother, to her San Francisco Opera credits, which include Cassandra in *Les Troyens* and Klytaemnestra in Strauss' *Elektra*. Bass-baritone **Alfred Walker**, who made an acclaimed Company debut as Orest in *Elektra* in 2017, returns as the father, Peter. Tenor **Robert Brubaker** will perform the Witch, a role he has also portrayed at the Metropolitan Opera. San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows soprano **Natalie Image** and mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon** are the Dew Fairy and Sandman, respectively.

The lush score, with its many memorable musical moments including the overture, "Witches' Ride," "Evening Prayer" and "Dream Pantomime," will be conducted by **Christopher Franklin**. Based in Lucca, Italy, the American maestro made his Company debut in 2017 with Puccini's *Turandot* and returned last year to conduct the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows in concert. **Ian Robertson** prepares the children's chorus which is comprised of members of the San Francisco Girls Chorus (Valérie Sainte-Agathe, Artistic Director) and San Francisco Boys Chorus (Eric Choate, Artistic Director).

Joining McDonald in bringing the production to the stage are a creative team made up of associate stage director **Danielle Urbas**, associate designer **Ricardo Pardo**, lighting designer **Lucy Carter**, revival lighting designer **Neill Brinkworth** and choreographer **Lucy Burge**, all in their Company debuts.

Sung in English with English supertitles, the eight performances of *Hansel and Gretel* are scheduled for November 15 (7:30pm), November 17 (2pm), November 21 (7:30pm), November 23 (7:30pm), November 30 (2pm), December 1 (2pm), December 3 (7:30pm) and December 7 (7:30pm), 2019.

### **FAMILY HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AT THE OPERA HOUSE**

Coinciding with the holiday season in San Francisco, this family-friendly production of *Hansel and Gretel* offers a rich musical and theatrical experience that is recommended for families with children ages 6 and up. Children with performance tickets are invited to participate in a gingerbread scavenger hunt that starts in the Opera House lobby. Following the performances on Saturday, November 30 and Sunday, December 1, audience members can meet magical fairy tale characters. Tickets to *Hansel and Gretel* for children under 18 are available at 50% off with the purchase of one or more adult tickets in certain sections. For more details, visit <https://sfopera.com/hanselandgretel>.

### **EARN YOUR WINGS 2019**

This season's performances of *Hansel and Gretel* will be accompanied by the return of the Earn Your Wings campaign. Launched in 2018 in connection with the production of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Earn Your Wings is a social consciousness and civic engagement initiative presented in collaboration with two organizations, Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership, that offer services to help people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to secure stable housing.

This year's campaign focuses on the word "home." A *Hansel and Gretel*-inspired gingerbread house will be installed in the main lobby of the opera house, and patrons are encouraged to write their responses to the question, "What does 'home' mean to you?" on candy-shaped sticky notes and attach them to the house. Representatives from both partner organizations will be present in the lobby at every performance.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **San Francisco Opera Guild Previews: *Hansel and Gretel* November 4–6, 2019**

The San Francisco Opera Guild chapters around the Bay Area and the San Jose Opera Guild present introductory Opera Preview talks about Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* by scholar **Simon Williams**. Each 90-minute presentation provides in-depth insight into the opera's history, composer, story and music. For schedule and locations, visit <https://sfopera.com/hanselandgreteloperapreview>.

### **Community Conversation: Cultivating Civic Practice: Hype or Hope Wilsey Center for Opera, Veterans Building, 4th floor 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco 94102 Thursday, November 14, 2019, 6–7:30pm**

As part of San Francisco Opera's Community Conversation Series and Earn Your Wings initiative, the Company hosts a public conversation about civic practice moderated by San Francisco Opera Director of Diversity, Equity and Community **Charles Chip Mc Neal**. The panel will discuss ways in which arts organizations and community groups can work together in meaningful partnerships. Free and open to the public; no reservations required.

### **Exploration Workshops for Families: *All About Hansel and Gretel* Wilsey Center for Opera, Veterans Building, 4th floor 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco 94102 Saturday, November 30, 2019 at 11am and 12:30pm**

These interactive, family workshops are designed to explore Engelbert Humperdinck's whimsical opera by learning about the story, music, production design and characters. Attendance at an opera performance is not required to participate. Workshops are for families with children ages 6 and older. Tickets are \$10 per person and a limited number of discounted tickets are available for families in need. For tickets and information, visit <https://sfopera.com/explore-hansel-gretel>.

### **Macy's Holiday Tree Lighting Union Square, San Francisco Friday, November 29, 2019, 6pm**

As part Macy's 30th annual tree-lighting ceremony in San Francisco's Union Square, San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows soprano **Natalie Image** and mezzo-soprano **Simone McIntosh** will sing the Evening Prayer from Act I of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and a medley of holiday favorites accompanied by pianist **César Cañon**. Image sings the role of the Dew Fairy and covers the role of Gretel, and McIntosh is the cover artist for Hansel. The celebration will also include performances by the San Francisco Boys Chorus, Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, the cast of San Francisco Playhouse's *Groundhog Day the Musical*,

the season 16 winner of NBC's *The Voice*, Maelyn Jarmon, and a special visit from Santa Claus.

### **TICKETS AND INFORMATION**

Tickets for *Hansel and Gretel* are priced from \$26 to \$398. Admission for children under 18 is available at 50% off with the purchase of one or more adult tickets in certain sections. A \$2 facility fee is included in all Balcony sections. All other sections include a \$3-per-ticket facility fee. For tickets, visit [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com), call (415) 864-3330 or visit the San Francisco Opera Box Office at 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco. Box Office hours: Monday 10am–5pm; Tuesday through Saturday 10am–6pm. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 am on the morning of each performance. Standing room tickets are \$10 each, cash only and limited to two tickets per person. Casting, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change.

Each presentation of *Hansel and Gretel* at the War Memorial Opera House features a 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk by conductor Peter Susskind. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue, within walking distance of the Civic Center BART Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49 and the F Market Street. Van Ness Construction: Due to construction for the SFMTA Van Ness Improvement Project, there is limited access to pick-up and drop-off at 301 Van Ness Avenue, and bus lines 47, 49 and 90 may experience travel delays. Please use the white loading zone at 450 Franklin Street (behind the Opera House) for rideshare pick-up and drop-off. For further information about public transportation and parking, visit [sfopera.com/plan-your-visit/directions-and-parking](http://sfopera.com/plan-your-visit/directions-and-parking).

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### **HANSEL AND GRETEL CASTING / CALENDAR**

\*San Francisco Opera Debut   ♪Role Debut   †Current Adler Fellow

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House  
301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco CA 94102

**HANSEL AND GRETEL** (*Hänsel und Gretel*) by Engelbert Humperdinck  
NEW CO-PRODUCTION

**November 15** (7:30 pm), **17** (2 pm), **21** (7:30 pm), **23** (7:30 pm), **30** (2 pm); **December 1** (2 pm), **3** (7:30 pm), **7** (7:30 pm), **2019**

Co-production with Royal Opera, Covent Garden  
Libretto by Adelheid Wette; English translation by David Pountney  
Sung in English with English supertitles  
Approximate running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes including one intermission

First Performance: Weimar, December 23, 1893  
First SFO performance: September 14, 1929

Most recent SFO performance: 2002–03 Season (opened November 17, 2002)

**Cast:**

*Hansel*  
*Gretel*  
*The Witch*  
*Gertrude*  
*Peter*  
*Sandman*  
*Dew Fairy*

**Sasha Cooke**  
**Heidi Stober**  
**Robert Brubaker**  
**Michaela Martens**  
**Alfred Walker**♪  
**Ashley Dixon**♪  
**Natalie Image**♪

**Creative Team:**

*Conductor*  
*Director & Production Designer*  
*Associate Stage Director*  
*Associate Designer*  
*Lighting Designer*  
*Revival Lighting Designer*  
*Choreographer*  
*Chorus Director*

**Christopher Franklin**  
**Antony McDonald\***  
**Danielle Urbas\***  
**Ricardo Pardo\***  
**Lucy Carter\***  
**Neill Brinkworth\***  
**Lucy Burge\***  
**Ian Robertson**

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra and the San Francisco Opera Chorus**

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San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by The Dolby Family, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Keith and Priscilla Geeslin, Ann and Gordon Getty, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey and Barbara A. Wolfe.

*Hansel and Gretel* is made possible, in part, by: The Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions; Bertie Bialek Elliott; and the San Francisco Opera Guild.

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Earn Your Wings is supported by funding from a Civic Practice Grant from OPERA America's Opera Fund



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High resolution downloadable photographs of *Hansel and Gretel* and artist headshots are available at [sfopera.com/press](https://sfopera.com/press). For cast biographies, visit [sfopera.com](https://sfopera.com).

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